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SERMON

PREACHED IN

LAMBETH CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER, 2, 1792.

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND WILLIAM BULLER, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF EXETER.

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By JOHN STURGES, LL.D.
CHANCELLOR OF THE DIOCESE OF WINCHESTER,
AND CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

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SERMON, &c.

ROMANS, CHAP. XII. VER. 4, 5.

AS WE HAVE MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY, AND ALL MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE; SO WE BEING MANY ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.

IN the beginning of the Chriſtian Church, different Gifts were conferred by the Holy Spirit on many of its members, and different Offices aſſigned to them, for the purpoſe of ſupporting and extending the Religion, which had been then recently planted by the Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord. This diſtribution of Gifts and Offices is compared by St. Paul in the text, and in other paſſages of his Epiſtles, to the members of the Human Body, which have all their reſpective and neceſſary uſes, and all conſpire by their union to form a Perfect Man. "God appointed ſome "Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and "ſome Paſtors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the "Saints,

" Saints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the building up " of the Body of Chriſt.*"

In the ſucceeding ages of the Church, when the immediate and extraordinary interpoſition of God in its favor ceaſed to be exerted, and ſeemed no longer requiſite, a regular form of Society under human guidance and a due ſubordination of its Miniſters were not leſs neceſſary, than the firſt proviſions by divine appointment, to maintain and to continue it in its more mature and extended ſtate.

The compariſon therefore of St. Paul was not more applicable to the Church of Chriſt at the period when he wrote, than it has been to Chriſtian Societies of later times; and indeed than it always is to Human Society at large: the very exiſtence of which depends on the due arrangement and ſubordination of its parts, and on their all concurring, by their ſituations and functions in promoting the general ends of Social Life. In proportion as we are removed from a mere ſavage ſtate, the differences of property, condition, and employment will be increaſed. As we advance in arts, and in the conveniences and comforts derived from them, as knowlege is cultivated and diffuſed, the machine becomes more complicated; the ſame ſimplicity of movements, which ſufficiently anſwered all neceſſary purpoſes

* Eph. iv. 11, 12.

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in a rude ſtate, is no longer adequate to our multiplied wants and encreaſed demands.

Hence then the great diſparity of conditions, which obtains in countries highly civilized; hence that variety of ranks, characters, purſuits, employments, relative ſituations of wealth and poverty, into which human life is branched out in them; a diſparity, which may undoubtedly be in ſome inſtances too great, but which in general affects the happineſs of individuals much leſs than at firſt ſight we ſhould be apt to imagine. For when the wants of our nature are once ſupplied, when we are oppreſſed with no particular evils either of body or mind, happineſs is not annexed excluſively to rank, or wealth, or knowlege, but may be poſſeſſed (as far as it can be poſſeſſed in this world) in comparative obſcurity, poverty, and ignorance. So much does Habit reduce us all in this reſpect to a level; and if it does not alter the nature of the things themſelves, it at leaſt (which is the ſame) alters their effect on us. Not to mention that the loweſt conditions in civilized countries are attended with conveniences and comforts, which Savage Life is in no condition capable of poſſeſſing.

From the great Social Body being well compoſed, from all its Members performing duely their reſpective functions, reſult internal peace and external reſpectability, private comfort and public welfare; to produce all which in a

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country like our own, the labor of the Peaſant, the ſkill of the Mechanic, the enterprize of the Merchant, the learning of the Legal Magiſtrate, and the comprehenſive knowlege of the Stateſman, are equally required.

The bleſſings ariſing from the order and proviſions of well regulated Society are a ſubject at all times (and in this eſpecially) ſo intereſting, that when they are once mentioned it is difficult not to dwell on them. I meant only to obſerve that——

St. Paul's compariſon of the Human Body and Members was equally applicable to Society on its largeſt ſcale and to its various ſub-diviſions. For beſides that, which embraces the whole maſs of a country, and lays all its people under the ſame general regulations and laws, there will be contained within it particular claſſes and deſcriptions of men, ſet apart for the diſcharge of duties peculiar to themſelves. And to theſe, difference of rank, authority, and office will not be leſs neceſſary, than to the great community, of which they make a part; they will not otherwiſe anſwer the ends of their inſtitution: ſo far are they from being leſs neceſſary, that in theſe exceptions to the general body of the people, ſtricter rules and a more marked ſubordination are often required. By engaging in certain profeſſions men give up part of the liberty, which the public law of their country allows them, and become ſubject to ſuperiors of their own,

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and to regulations binding only on themſelves; but theſe additional burdens they voluntarily aſſume; it is the condition on which they enter into their reſpective profeſſions; and they have no right to complain of reſtraints, which are impoſed on them in conſequence of their own choice.

Such is the Eccleſiaſtical Profeſſion in this country, conſiſting of that claſs of men, who are the Miniſters of our National Church. They are ſet apart from the reſt of the community for the performance of religious ſervices; for adminiſtering the outward Forms, and, by their inſtruction explaining the Truths and enforcing the Precepts of our Religion. Theſe duties are of high importance; for no attentive obſerver of mankind can doubt of the effect (the ſilent perhaps and gradual, yet the certain effect) theſe repeated Forms, this continued Inſtruction, have on them. With the due performance therefore of theſe duties is cloſely connected the Moral Character of a Nation; what will recommend the individuals who compoſe it to the favor of God both here and hereafter, and what will moſt contribute to its preſent welfare as a community.

But things of ſuch importance are not to be left to the will of the perſons entruſted with them to be performed, or not, as they ſhall think proper: there is no claſs of men, to whoſe general integrity we may give this credit: none, in which many of its members will not ſtand in need of conſtant

conſtant inſpection to remind them of their duty, and of authority to enforce it. There muſt then be ſuperintendence and ſubordination; and theſe will be more neceſſary in proportion as ſuch a profeſſion is more widely extended. This neceſſity ariſes not from the habits or character of any particular profeſſion, but from the general principles of human nature, which (it is well known) require the interpoſition of law and authority, in order to enſure from us the performance of our reſpective duties.

Conformable to theſe principles is the Conſtitution of our Church; ſuch a diſtinction of ranks, ſuch a diſtribution of offices, ſuch a ſubordination obtain in it, as may be ſuppoſed beſt adapted to regulate the conduct of its Clergy, and to ſecure the great objects of the Eſtabliſhment itſelf. By putting the whole under the authority of Biſhops, who are to admit its Miniſters, who are to ſuperintend their conduct, and govern them during their Miniſtry, we are perſuaded, that we comply with the inſtitution of the Apoſtles and with the practice of the Primitive Church. But if this were not ſo, if no ſuch form of Church-Government had come recommended to us by ſuch high authority, and it were to be provided for by the common expedients of human prudence, like other matters of the world, what is more natural and more obvious, than to ſelect eminent men from among the Clergy themſelves, and to commit this ſuperintending power to their hands; a power, which ſhould not indeed

indeed exceed the limits of the Church, its proper province, but which within that province ſhould be ſufficiently active and efficacious.

Before the Reformation in this country the pretenſions of the Church were in truth exorbitant; and there ſubſiſted a conſtant ſtruggle between the eccleſiaſtical and the civil authority. Exceſſive powers were claimed by the Clergy and exerciſed (as occaſion offered) by their Superiors, which equally intrenched on the liberties of the People, and the ſovereignty of the State. Theſe unreaſonable pretenſions have been long abandoned; the Proteſtant Church of England claims no civil powers of her own, and aſſerts no civil independence. Under the State ſhe holds her rank, her immunities, and her proviſion. The principles, on which we ſeparated from the See of Rome, eſtabliſhed this juſt dependence of the Church on the State, this ſubordination of the Eccleſiaſtical to the Civil Magiſtrate, of the regulations of the former to the laws of the latter. But moreover the ſpirit of the nation jealous of reſtraint and making conſtant advances in civil liberty would ill brook the interference of eccleſiaſtical power in caſes not properly ſubject to it; and in fact it has carried this diſpoſition to an extreme, by narrowing and reducing it ſo far, as not to leave it ſufficient energy for duely adminiſtering the internal Government of the Church.

For however jealous the Laity may be of eccleſiaſtical incroachments (though the repetition of them becomes every day leſs probable) it can never be their intereſt ſo to weaken the hands of the Governors of the Church, as to render them incapable of controuling the conduct of its Miniſters, of making them do their duty, and anſwer the purpoſes of their appointment, and of removing cauſes of complaint which very naturally come from the Laity themſelves. It can never be the intereſt of the people at large ſo to relax the laws, which bind any particular claſs of men, as to ſet that claſs at liberty from its own obligations, and to defeat the purpoſes for which it is formed. The ſort of government to which an army is ſubject, is a ſtriking exception to the general ſyſtem of a free country; but it is by no means the public intereſt to do away this exception, by deſtroying military ſubordination. An army is no longer uſeful, and becomes highly dangerous, the moment it ceaſes to be implicitly obedient.

I would not be underſtood to put military and eccleſiaſtical ſubordination on the ſame footing; but if I might venture to ſelect an inſtance, in which there ſeems in the preſent times to be a want of ſufficient power in the Governors of our Church to controul its Miniſters, I ſhould name the Reſidence of the Clergy. It is confeſſedly a matter of great importance; the due diſcharge of their functions, and the effect of theſe on the congregations committed to their care,

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are intimately connected with it. It is not, that the law of the land is ſilent on the ſubject of Reſidence, or wanting in ſeverity to enforce it; but it is hardly ever employed to obtain a more regular and punctual performance of religious ſervices, or to amend the manners of a Pariſh by recalling its own Paſtor to his duty, being for the moſt part only reſorted to as an inſtrument of mean reſentment and private malice*. A liberal man, whatever may be his opinion of a non-reſident incumbent, will not deſcend to levy on him the pecuniary penalties inflicted by the law. This is in its nature a rigid, inflexible rule; it cannot adjuſt itſelf to circumſtances, comply with occaſions, or admit diſtinctions; it pronounces its judgment generally and indiſcriminately. What ſeems wanting in this caſe is the conſiderate and paternal, yet prompt and effective authority of the Biſhop to make theſe diſcriminations; ſuch a power ſhould be diſcretionary, to enforce the general rule where it is proper, where it is not proper to relax it.

The expediency of the rule itſelf is obvious, and in moſt caſes inconteſtable. That a Clergyman ſhould himſelf perform the duty, which he has ſolemnly undertaken to per-

* See 21 Hen. viii. c. 13. & 13 El. c. 20.

The forfeiture of £.10. by the firſt of theſe ſtatutes for *wilful* non-reſidence, *by the ſpace of one month together, or by the ſpace of two months to be at ſeveral times in any one year*, was at the time when this law paſſed, a very heavy penalty.

form; that he ſhould devote his perſonal ſervices to that particular pariſh and congregation, which are committed to his care; that theſe ſervices will for the moſt part be performed better by the Principal, who is himſelf reſponſible, than by his Subſtitute; that the permanent connection of an Incumbent with his Pariſhioners, and his probable ability of living among them hoſpitably and charitably are more likely to give him weight with them, to conciliate their benevolence, and to produce that mutual regard ſo favorable to the intereſts of virtue and religion, than in the caſe of his being repreſented by a Curate, who cannot be ſuppoſed to poſſeſs all theſe advantages in the ſame degree; are points, which can hardly be diſputed, and which place the obligation to Reſidence in ſo ſtrong a light, as in Theory hardly to admit any exception to it.

But Theory in the concerns of common life is never perfectly reducible to Practice. The infinite variety of circumſtances continually occuring makes it almoſt impoſſible to lay down any rule from which it may not be ſometimes expedient to depart; and with this, however in itſelf juſt and reaſonable, there may ariſe many caſes wherein it may be prudent and humane to diſpenſe. Whenever it is diſpenſed with, the firſt requiſite is, that the abſence of the Principal ſhould be ſupplied as well as poſſible by the Subſtitute; ſo that the diſadvantages uſually attending ſuch ſubſtitution be, as far as they can be, obviated. It would much contribute

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to effect this, if no Curates were permitted to officiate without Licence, by which they come under the immediate cognizance of the Dioceſan; and that ſtill larger powers were given to the Dioceſan himſelf, than the Law at preſent gives, to regulate their Salaries*. This requiſite reſpects the Cure of the non-reſident Incumbent, the other which I ſhall mention, reſpects him perſonally; that in order to be intitled to indulgence for not diſcharging the employment, which expreſſly belongs to him, he be elſewhere properly, uſefully, and profeſſionally employed. For it is ſurely making uſe of our holy profeſſion in a way highly unbecoming, for men to aſſume it as a qualification merely for obtaining an income, and then to live at large in the world, without regard to its duties, on the clear annuity ariſing from this income, after the expences of management are defrayed.

But when the duties of the abſentee are well provided for, when he himſelf is well employed, there are certainly caſes continually occurring, which deſerve indulgence. Many innocent and laudable motives of health, of domeſtic economy and private convenience (eſpecially where families

* By 12 An. St. 2. c. 12, In the caſe of non-reſident Incumbents, *the Biſhop or Ordinary having regard to the greatneſs of the cure and the value of the benefice, ſhall, on or before granting a licence to the Curate appoint a ſufficient certain ſtipend and allowance, not exceeding £50. nor leſs than £20. a year.* Since the date of this Statute the neceſſary expence of living has in this country conſiderably increaſed.

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are large and circumſtances contracted) make it extremely deſirable for a Clergyman to be permitted to live in a ſituation different from that, in which his profeſſional lot happens to be caſt. And the ſituation wherein it is caſt may not be that, to which his temper or abilities are beſt adapted; this is often a matter not of ſelection, but of chance; he may be elſewhere employed to more advantage; his talents may be worthy of a better ſtation, than an obſcure and inconſiderable village. His own field may be a contracted or barren ſpot, on which his induſtry and ſkill would be almoſt thrown away; whereas if he were permitted to cultivate the more extended and fertile land of his neighbour, he might raiſe from it an abundant and uſeful produce.

It may alſo ſometimes happen, that the removal of an eſtabliſhed and reſpectable Curate, to make way for the Principal, may be a diſadvantageous exchange; it may be both a hardſhip on the Curate, and a detriment to the Pariſh, which had been the object of his care. Theſe are caſes, for which written Laws cannot provide; they can only be properly determined by the diſcretion of ſome ſuperior, who, at the ſame time that he has power to enforce the Rule, will judge of the reaſonable exceptions to it; who, with a diſpoſition to maintain order and to exact the performance of duty, may yet attend to circumſtances, which call for indulgence, and allow them their proper weight. Such a ſuperior (we may preſume) is a Biſhop to his Clergy. This

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power in the hands of our Biſhops would (I am perſuaded) be always moderated by a kind conſideration for the convenience, the wants, and the infirmities of their Brethren; but yet they ſhould poſſeſs it; and if they do not ſo poſſeſs it, that it may be exerted with promptneſs, with eaſe, and with effect, they ſeem not ſufficiently furniſhed with means for ſecuring the due performance of religious ſervices, and preſerving the order of the Church.

On this performance and this order depend the effect of our Eſtabliſhment on the body of the people, and the public opinion of its utility. Our Clergy, collectively taken, have (I truſt) higher motives for diſcharging their obligations properly; for adminiſtering the rites and delivering the precepts of their Religion, not merely as a buſineſs to be gone through or a matter of form to be diſpatched, but with ſerioufneſs and earneſtneſs; and for ſhewing the efficacy of theſe religious rites and precepts by their own example, by the integrity of their conduct and the purity of their manners: they have (I truſt) higher motives for theſe things than public opinion and popular favor. In ſubordination however to ſuch motives, it is at all times worth while to regard and conciliate theſe (as much for the intereſt of the nation at large as for that of the Clergy themſelves) not by ſervile compliances with prevailing faſhions nor by oſtentatious pretenſions to ſuperior ſanctity, but by ſincere, uſeful, and ſubſtantial piety. And it is ſo in theſe times eſpecially,

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when not only the utility of all religious inſtitutions is called in queſtion, but the firſt principles of Civil Society are controverted, and the ſtrong holds of all Government attacked: when it becomes all the friends of tranquillity and order to unite as in a common cauſe, and to repell the approaches of confuſion and anarchy. By an exemplary diſcharge of our duties, it is in the power of Us, the Miniſters of our National Church, to bear a diſtinguiſhed part in this ſervice of our Country, becauſe the Religion we teach promotes the peace, the ſecurity, and happineſs of mankind; and, if this religion be taught by us faithfully, and by our conduct be well recommended, it will by its influence give effect to the Laws of Society, will co-operate with all good Government, and will eſpecially protect the BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

THE END.